

Elite Opponents

Variant Gelatinous Cubes

Creature Incarnations
By Robert Wiese



Welcome to *Creature Incarnations*, a column all about monsters -- and strange, variant monsters at that! The *D&D Fight Club* column presents one monster at three different power levels, so that you can insert the appropriate version into your campaign. This column, on the other hand, examines different versions of a given creature for use in different types of campaigns. Though most versions fit best into **D&D** campaigns, one version in this installment is for the **d20 Modern** game, so you can use the creature in your modern-day or future campaigns too.

Design Notes

Welcome back! Today we embark on a journey into the depths of the dungeon to meet some of the strangest monsters known -- gelatinous cubes.



The gelatinous cube doesn't see (no pun intended) many adventurers beyond 3rd or 4th level because it is traditionally a wimpy monster. All you have to do is avoid it, and it doesn't really bother you. Traditionally, gelatinous cubes are just lonely dungeon cleaners whose function is to reset the dungeon by eating the bodies (both character and monster) that adventuring parties leave behind.

Some of the better trap designers, however, have made ingenious use of these creatures. My personal favorite is the pit filled with a gelatinous cube, with a sliding door that closes over it as soon as someone falls in. If you don't have friends, you aren't getting out of that trap without magic. Another good trap drops the cube from above, so that it automatically engulfs the character who set it off.

The three gelatinous cubes I've presented here are not necessarily for higher party levels. In truth, modifying a gelatinous cube to reach or exceed CR 10 can be a difficult trick. One of this set -- the monk cube -- is relatively powerful, but be sure that it uses all its abilities to evade damage, slow falls, or deflect arrows in front of the PCs, or they won't get the full effect. The rest of the cubes here are pretty strange, but still suitable for lower-level groups.

Let's admit it. As far as monsters go, gelatinous cubes can be pretty amusing. Every one of these versions has some humorous element to it -- so enjoy!

d20 Modern: Lab Experiment Gone Awry

The mysterious aliens called fraal (also known as grays) have been meddling with life on Earth for millennia. They are primarily interested in humans, but they also like to study how visits by other species have affected human development through the centuries. One aspect of their research involves taking specimens of living beings and performing experiments on them to determine which creatures are compatible with fraal genes. Occasionally, they even find a species that could be improved by such an addition. Over the centuries, they have examined just about every creature that humans have ever encountered.

As a result of their genetic experiments, this odd creature -- a half-fraal/half-gelatinous cube -- resides in a lab hidden somewhere on Earth. The fraal were fascinated by the cube's totally alien form and its lack of complex physiology. So they collected a few of the creatures and took them back to their city-ships, where they proceeded to poke and prod them -- a process that the cubes hardly seemed to notice -- and take tissue samples. Eventually, they managed to isolate the cube's genetic code and began splicing its genes with their own, as well as the genes of humans and other life forms. Most of their experiments died, but this one survived. The fraal genes didn't change the creature's appearance much, though it looks grayer and slightly less transparent than a normal gelatinous cube. However, the cube did grow much bigger than a normal specimen, and eventually it started consuming the fraal's laboratories.

The fraal deposited it back on Earth in a secret laboratory that they no longer used and surrounded the place with metal and stone. Unless it gets out, it will be waiting there when a band of intrepid heroes eventually finds it. The fraal did arrange for it to be fed periodically, so it is not exactly suffering, but it is hungry.

Combat

This creature's psionics provide it with a significant advantage. It uses *suggestion* primarily to get its victims to stand still while it engulfs them.

Advanced Half-Fraal/Half-Gelatinous Cube CR 7

N Gargantuan ooze (alien)

Action Points 0

Init -5; Senses blindsight 60 ft.; Listen +10, Spot +10

Languages None

Defense 5, touch 5, flat-footed 5

(-4 size, -5 Dex, +4 natural)

hp 320 (20 HD)

Immune critical hits, electricity, flanking, gaze attacks, illusions, mind-affecting effects (charms, compulsions, phantasms, patterns, and morale effects), paralysis, poison, polymorph, sleep, stunning, visual effects, and other attack forms that rely on sight

Fort +15, Ref +1, Will +3

Speed 15 ft. (3 squares)

Melee slam +14 (1d8+4 plus 1d6 acid)

Space 20 ft.; Reach 15 ft.

Base Atk +15; Grp +30

Atk Options acid, paralysis

Special Actions engulf

Power Points/Day: n/a; Powers Known (ML 5th):

At will -- lesser mindlink, suggestion (DC 8)

Abilities Str 16, Dex 1, Con 28, Int 4, Wis 5, Cha 3

SA acid, engulf, paralysis

SQ transparent

Rep +0

Feats Alertness, Cleave, Great Cleave, Power Attack, Sunder

Skills Hide -17, Listen +10, Move Silently +6, Search +8, Spot +10, Survival +0

Acid (Ex) The cube's body produces a corrosive substance. Any creature that strikes or touches the cube with its body, or that grapples it, automatically takes 1d6 points of acid damage. A creature takes damage from this ability only once per turn. This cube's acid does not harm metal or stone.

Engulf (Ex) Although it moves slowly, this cube can simply mow down Large or smaller creatures as a standard action. It cannot make a slam attack during a round in which it engulfs. The cube merely moves over the opponents, affecting as many as it can cover. Opponents can make attacks of opportunity against the cube, but any creature that does so is not entitled to a saving throw. A creature that does not attempt an attack of opportunity must succeed on a DC 24 Reflex save or be engulfed. On a success, it is pushed back or aside (opponent's choice) as the cube moves forward. Engulfed creatures are subject to the cube's paralysis and acid and are considered to be grappled and trapped within its body. The save DC is Strength-based and includes a +1 racial bonus.

Paralysis (Ex) Anyone hit by the half-fraal/half-gelatinous cube's slam or engulf attack must succeed on a DC 29 Fortitude save or be paralyzed for 3d6 rounds. The cube can automatically engulf a paralyzed opponent. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Transparent (Ex) A half-fraal/half-gelatinous cube is hard to see, even under ideal conditions, but not as hard to see as an unmodified gelatinous cube. It takes a DC 13 Spot check to notice one. Creatures that fail to notice the cube and walk into it are automatically engulfed.

Hook "Talk about your botched science experiments!"

Alien Gelatinous Cube

This creature is not all that different from the standard gelatinous cube, even though it has an inherited template. But a gelatinous cube with tentacles is still kind of freaky, don't you think? The pseudonatural template creates a similar creature, though that one has an Intelligence score, just as the next entry does.

A half-farspawn (see *Lords of Madness*) results when a being from the Far Realm comes to the known planes and mates with a native creature. The creatures of the Far Realm are barely imaginable, and their offspring are only slightly more believable. Certain creatures, such as cloaklers and chuuls, were once native to the Far Realm but came to Material Plane long ago and took up permanent residence here. Beyond the Far Realm are beings so inconceivable that they cannot be brought into existence in the known planes at all. Thus, this gelatinous cube is about as alien as it can get.

Half-Farspawn/Half-Gelatinous Cube CR 4

N Huge outsider (native)

Init -4; Senses blindsight 60 ft.; Listen -3, Spot -3

Languages None

AC 7, touch 4, flat-footed 7

(-2 size, -4 Dex, +3 natural)

hp 66 (4 HD)

Immune critical hits, electricity, flanking, gaze attacks, illusions, mind-affecting effects (charms, compulsions, phantasms, patterns, and morale effects), paralysis, poison, polymorph, sleep, stunning, visual effects, and other attack forms that rely on sight

Resist acid 10; SR 14

Fort +12, Ref -3, Will -2

Speed 15 ft. (3 squares)

Melee 2 tentacles +2 (1d8+1 plus 1d6 acid) or

Melee slam +2 (1d6 plus 1d6 acid)

Space 15 ft.; Reach 10 ft. (15 ft. with tentacle)

Base Atk +3; Grp +12

Atk Options acid, paralysis, true strike

Special Actions engulf

Abilities Str 12, Dex 3, Con 32, Int --, Wis 5, Cha 3

SA acid, engulf, paralysis, true strike

SQ change shape, transparent

Feats None

Skills Hide -12, Listen -3, Spot -3

Acid (Ex) The half-farspawn/half-gelatinous cube's body produces a corrosive substance. Any creature that strikes or touches the cube with its body, or that grapples it, automatically takes 1d6 points of acid damage. A creature takes damage from this ability only once per turn. This cube's acid does not harm metal or stone.

Change Shape (Su) A half-farspawn/half-gelatinous cube can assume the form of a grotesque, tentacled mass. as a standard action. This ability functions as a polymorph spell cast on itself as a 4th-level caster, except a half-farspawn/half-gelatinous cube does not regain hit points for changing form, and its movement modes do not change. Furthermore, it retains the tentacle attacks granted by this template and gains two additional tentacle attacks when using a full attack action. In addition, any creature native to the Material Plane takes a -1 morale penalty on attacks against it. A half-farspawn/half-gelatinous cube remains in one form until it chooses to assume a new one. The cube reverts to its natural form when killed. A true seeing spell reveals its natural form.

Engulf (Ex) Although it moves slowly, a half-farspawn/half-gelatinous cube can simply mow down Large or smaller creatures as a standard action. It cannot make a slam attack during a round in which it engulfs. The cube merely moves over the opponents, affecting as many as it can cover. Opponents can make attacks of opportunity against the cube, but any creature that does so is not entitled to a saving throw. A creature that does not attempt an attack of opportunity must succeed on a DC 15 Reflex save or be engulfed. On a success, it is pushed back or aside (opponent's choice) as the cube moves forward. Engulfed creatures are subject to the cube's paralysis and acid, and are considered to be grappled and trapped within its body. The save DC is Strength-based and includes a +1 racial bonus.

Paralysis (Ex) Anyone hit by a half-farspawn/half-gelatinous cube's slam or engulf attack must succeed on a DC 23 Fortitude save or be paralyzed for 3d6 rounds. The cube can automatically engulf a paralyzed opponent. The save DC is Constitution-based.

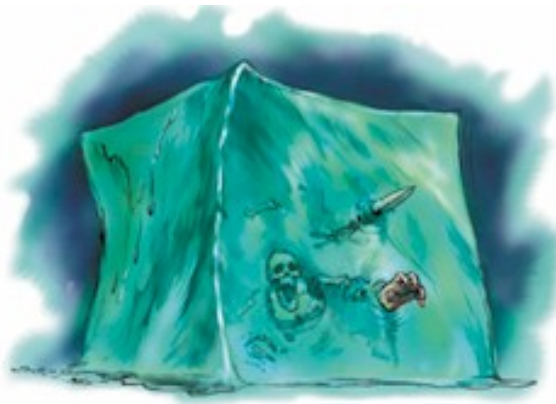
Transparent (Ex) Half-farspawn/half-gelatinous cubes are hard to see, even under ideal conditions, and it takes a DC 15 Spot check to notice one. Creatures who fail to notice the cube and walk into it are automatically engulfed.

True Strike (Su) Once per day, the half-farspawn/half-gelatinous cube can make a normal attack with a +20 insight bonus on a single attack roll. It ignores the miss chance that applies to concealed targets.

Hook "The ooze over there with the tentacles looks weird, like some cubic displacer beast. It can't be real, can it?"

Gelatinous Cube Monk

This highly improbable creature is the result of taking the rules to the very limit. Giving an ooze class levels is usually impossible because these creatures don't have Intelligence scores. However, the fiendish template provides this cube with a 3 Intelligence, and off we go.



Monk levels seem to fit very well with the gelatinous cube's other abilities, and the monk class gives the creature some really humorous powers, such as deflecting arrows. Barbarian or fighter levels would work too, but a gelatinous cube is limited in its use of feats because of its generally low attribute scores.

The real question with this creature is where it could learn any monk skills. Ooze monasteries aren't exactly plentiful, after all. It must have studied on its own, just like Miyamoto Musashi did.

This cube looks like its brethren, except that it has a slight red tinge. It doesn't fly, but it sure moves quickly compared to normal gelatinous cubes. It should provide quite a surprise to adventuring parties, though perhaps it's not as much of a challenge as its CR would indicate. Its AC is still only 6, after all.

Fiendish Gelatinous Cube Monk CR 12

Fiendish gelatinous cube monk 10

LE Huge ooze (extraplanar)

Init -4; Senses blindsight 60 ft.; Listen -1, Spot +8

Languages None

AC 6, touch 6, flat-footed 6; Deflect Arrows

(-2 size, -4 Dex, +2 class)

hp 193 (14 HD); DR 10/magic

Immune critical hits, electricity, flanking, gaze attacks, illusions, mind-affecting effects (charms, compulsions, phantasms, patterns, and morale effects), normal disease, paralysis, poison, polymorph, sleep, stunning, visual effects, and other attack forms that rely on sight

Resist cold 20, fire 20; improved evasion; SR 19

Fort +16, Ref +4, Will +5 (+7 against enchantments)

Speed 45 ft. (9 squares)

Melee slam +9 (1d6+1 plus 1d6 acid) or

Melee unarmed strike +9/+4 (4d6+1 plus 1d6 acid) or

Melee unarmed strike +9/+9/+4 (4d6+1 plus 1d6 acid) with flurry of blows

Space 15 ft.; Reach 10 ft.

Base Atk +10; Grp +19

Atk Options Improved Trip, Stunning Fist; acid, paralysis, smite good 1/day (+14 damage), ki strike (lawful, magic)

Special Actions engulf, wholeness of body (heal 20/day)

Abilities Str 12, Dex 3, Con 26, Int 3, Wis 1, Cha 1

SA acid, engulf, paralysis, smite good 1/day (+14 damage), ki strike (lawful, magic)

SQ slow fall 50 ft., transparent

Feats Alertness, Deflect ArrowsB, Improved Toughness, Improved TripB, Improved Unarmed StrikeB, Inured to Energy (cold), Inured to Energy (fire), Iron Will, Stunning FistB

Skills Hide -12, Listen -1, Spot +8

Acid (Ex) The fiendish gelatinous cube's body produces a corrosive substance. Any creature that strikes or touches the cube with its body, or that grapples it, automatically takes 1d6 points of acid damage. A creature takes damage from this ability only once per turn. This cube's acid does not harm metal or stone.

Engulf (Ex) The fiendish gelatinous cube can simply mow down Large or smaller creatures as a standard action. It cannot make a slam attack during a round in which it engulfs. The cube merely moves over the opponents, affecting as many as it can cover. Opponents can make attacks of opportunity against the cube, but any creature that does so is not entitled to a saving throw. A creature that does not attempt an attack of opportunity must succeed on a DC 14 Reflex save or be engulfed. On a success, it is pushed back or aside (opponent's choice) as the cube moves forward. Engulfed creatures are subject to the cube's paralysis and acid, and are considered to be grappled and trapped within its body. The save DC is Strength-based and includes a +1 racial bonus.

Paralysis (Ex) Anyone hit by the cube's slam or engulf attack must succeed on a DC 20 Fortitude save or be paralyzed for 3d6 rounds. The cube can automatically engulf a paralyzed opponent. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Transparent (Ex) Fiendish gelatinous cubes are hard to see, even under ideal conditions, and it takes a DC 15 Spot check to notice one. Creatures who fail to notice the cube and walk into it are automatically engulfed.

Hook "That gelatinous cube is sure fast. I've never seen one move like that."

Bonus: Amphibious Gelatinous Cube

This month you get an extra cube, because everyone can use extra gelatinous cubes. If this little gift doesn't reflect what I think (or should think) about you, you can always set Meepo on it.

Warning: This creature breaks the rules. There, you've been told. The amphibious template cannot be added to any creature other than humanoids and monstrous humanoids. And in most cases, that restriction makes sense. After all, you don't want a water-breathing dog -- such a creature would really do poorly living underwater, dog-paddling at a speed of only 5 feet. And most other creatures that you might put underwater don't need to breathe, or already have an aquatic variant somewhere in the rules, or can survive underwater with some magical aid. However, now and then it makes perfect sense for some creature other than the usual humanoid and monstrous humanoid types to live underwater in its own state.

An amphibious gelatinous cube looks sort of like an immense jellyfish, floating slowly through the water and eating whatever comes within range. This cube can live at 400 feet below sea level or float serenely on the surface waiting for small boats to come along. (Boats are like nuts; the shell is tough, but the inside is usually good to eat.) And since it's transparent, this cube is quite difficult to see in the water.

Amphibious Gelatinous Cube CR 3

N Huge ooze (aquatic)

Init -5; Senses blindsight 60 ft.; Listen -5, Spot -5

Languages None

AC 3, touch 3, flat-footed 3

(-2 size, -5 Dex)

hp 54 (4 HD)

Immune critical hits, electricity, flanking, gaze attacks, illusions, mind-affecting effects (charms, compulsions, phantasms, patterns, and morale effects), paralysis, poison, polymorph, sleep, stunning, visual effects, and

other attack forms that rely on sight

Fort +9, Ref -4, Will -4

Speed 15 ft. (3 squares), swim 5 ft.

Melee slam +1 (1d6 plus 1d6 acid)

Space 15 ft.; Reach 10 ft.

Base Atk +3; Grp +11

Atk Options acid, paralysis

Special Actions engulf

Abilities Str 10, Dex 1, Con 26, Int --, Wis 1, Cha 1

SA acid, engulf, paralysis

SQ amphibious, transparent

Skills Hide -13, Listen -5, Spot -5, Swim +8 (+16 for special actions or to avoid hazards)

Acid (Ex) The amphibious gelatinous cube's body produces a corrosive substance. Any creature that strikes or touches the cube with its body, or that grapples it, automatically takes 1d6 points of acid damage. A creature takes damage from this ability only once per turn. This cube's acid does not harm metal or stone.

Amphibious (Ex) An amphibious gelatinous cube can breathe air and water equally well.

Engulf (Ex) Although it moves slowly, the amphibious gelatinous cube can simply mow down Large or smaller creatures as a standard action. It cannot make a slam attack during a round in which it engulfs. The cube merely moves over the opponents, affecting as many as it can cover. Opponents can make attacks of opportunity against the cube, but any creature that does so is not entitled to a saving throw. A creature that does not attempt an attack of opportunity must succeed on a DC 13 Reflex save or be engulfed. On a success, it is pushed back or aside (opponent's choice) as the cube moves forward. Engulfed creatures are subject to the cube's paralysis and acid, and are considered to be grappled and trapped within its body. The save DC is Strength-based and includes a +1 racial bonus.

Paralysis (Ex) Anyone hit by the amphibious gelatinous cube's slam or engulf attack must succeed on a DC 20 Fortitude save or be paralyzed for 3d6 rounds. The cube can automatically engulf a paralyzed opponent. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Transparent (Ex) Amphibious gelatinous cubes are hard to see, even under ideal conditions, and it takes a DC 20 Spot check to notice one. Creatures who fail to notice a cube and walk into it are automatically engulfed.

Hook "What's our boat stuck on, anyway? Looks like some kind of clear, squishy island."

Next month, we'll consider some even stranger variant creatures. So y'all come back, now!

Additional Feats

The following feats are from sources other than the *Player's Handbook* and the *Monster Manual*.

Improved Toughness (from *Complete Warrior*): You gain a number of hit points equal to your current Hit Dice. Each time you gain a Hit Die (such as by gaining a level), you gain 1 additional hit point. If you lose a Hit Die (such as by losing a level), you lose 1 hit point permanently.

Inured to Energy (from *Savage Species*): Your existing resistance to one type of energy increases by 10. You can use this feat only to enhance existing resistances, not to gain resistance to a new type of energy. For example, a demon can increase its resistance to acid, cold, or fire, but it cannot gain sonic resistance with this

feat. You can gain this feat multiple times, and its effects stack. Each time you take the feat, you can either apply it to another type of energy to which you already have resistance, or increase an existing resistance.

About the Author

Robert Wiese entered the gaming hobby through the Boy Scouts and progressed from green recruit to head of the most powerful gaming fan organization in the world. He served as head of the **RPGA** Network for almost seven years, overseeing the creation of the *Living Greyhawk* and *Living Force* campaigns, among other achievements. Eventually, he returned to private life in Reno, Nevada, where he is still involved in writing, organizing conventions, and playing. He also models proteins for the Biochemistry Department of the University of Nevada, Reno and spends as much time as possible with his wife and many pets.

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